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ABSTRACT

Nationally, interest in family life and parenting programs has grown amidst concern for "basic education." Parenting education in today's schools may be justified because of increased family stress and deteriorating family support systems. Most parenting and family life courses are offered within home economics departments, have a narrow focus, and reach a small percentage of the nation's teenagers. Two Oregon programs at Medford Senior High School and Eugene's Churchill High School have evolved within the health education curriculum; both span a wide range of topics and provide a valuable experiential component--on-site nursery schools. This paper focuses first on the Medford program, particularly its family health course. The next chapter describes the early childhood courses at Churchill High School and details differences between the Eugene program and the Medford model. The final chapter offers guidance for other school districts eager to initiate parenting education courses or to refine existing programs. Staff members of both programs agree on four components ensuring success: community involvement, qualified staff, an on-site nursery school, and research into existing programs. Appended are 7 references and a list of 14 persons interviewed. (MLH)

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Parenting Education at Medford and Churchill High Schools

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Mary Cihak Jensen

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Preface

Characteristically our schools act to meet the often changing needs of society. Today, as the rates of divorce, child abuse, and teenage pregnancies increase, the society looks to its schools for a solution. Some commentators are suggesting now that the basic skills should be reading, writing, arithmetic, and parenting.

This Bulletin describes two Oregon family life and parenting education programs. In each of these programs, dedicated and talented staff members give their high school students both classroom lessons and practical experience in child care. In doing so, they contribute to the growth of their students and to the growth of society as a whole.

This Bulletin was written by Mary Cihak Jensen, a member of our staff and a doctoral candidate in the University of Oregon's educational psychology division.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

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Introduction

"We're used to getting things fast in this society. We go to McDonald's for a fast meal. We watch a thirty minute TV show for a fast laugh. Being a responsible parent is different. That takes work and we're not used to work."

"I'm worried about the deterioration of the family unit. I want to do what I can to help: I want to raise the best possible family, to make the happiest home I can."

The two eighteen-year-olds speak intently, anxious to share their insights. At Medford Senior High School, in Medford, Oregon, students commonly discuss society's need for stability, young children's need for love, and their own need for security. These students are enrolled in Family Health, a one-semester course in family life and parenting skills. All of them will assist in the onsite preschool and many of them will also enroll in the school's child development courses.

Students at Churchill High School, in Eugene, Oregon, consider similar topics in their Exploring Childhood and Family Life courses. Like the Medford students, they have a chance to put their theories into practice within Churchill's preschool facility.

Nationally, interest in family life and parenting programs has grown even in the midst of concern for a "basic education." In fact, the California School Boards Association, dedicating an entire issue of its journal to parenting education, calls it "the first basic." Barbara J. Tardif, writing in that issue, says there are several reasons to justify parenting education in today's schools:

One reason is the severe stress placed upon families in today's society. This stress has led to an increase in divorce, child abuse, teenage suicide, pregnancy, alcoholism and drug abuse. Another reason for parenting education is that families themselves are

changing....These changes in family life styles reduce the possibility of a family support system and increase

the sense of isolation, thus making the act of parenting more difficult.

Jan Brown Parrott, editor of the journal, contends that parenting education should be active rather than reactive. Parrott sees parenting education as more than just a cure for social ills: "Those who shape our children shape our destiny...parenting education should be taught to all children as an active force for improving our society and nurturing individual human development."

Nationwide, the availability and the content of courses described as parenting education vary widely. The educational branch of the National Center for Disease Control, says that only 10 percent of the nation's teenagers receive as much as one semester of family life education. The majority of family life and parenting courses are offered within home economics departments. Less frequently, the family life curriculum is integrated into health, social studies, or psychology classes. Many courses described as "parenting education" offer a narrow or single focus, such as family planning, health, or nutrition studies, rather than considering the broad range of skills that parenting demands.

Both the Medford Senior High School and the Churchill High School courses span a wide range of topics, from self-awareness to child development. In both schools, teenagers participate in a valuable experiential component: onsite nursery schools. It is not surprising that the National Academy for Families considered the two programs to be among the nation's outstanding family life and parenting classes. The academy selected both programs for indepth study in their publication, *A Nation for Families*.

This Bulletin focuses first on the Medford Senior High School program, in particular its Family Health course. The next chapter describes the Early Childhood courses at Churchill High School and details ways in which this Eugene program differs from the Medford model. The final chapter offers guidelines for other school districts eager to initiate parenting education courses or to refine existing programs.

Parenting Education at Medford Senior High School

The parenting education curriculum at Medford Senior High School has a history similar to that of other family life and childhood education programs. Since before World War II, the district's home economics teachers offered a course in Home Nursing. As society changed, the teachers considered the content of the Home Nursing class narrow and unresponsive to the community's needs.

Led by Ruth Hockersmith, then chairman of the home economics department, the staff developed a family life program that began as an elective for the high school's girls. "The girls soon began to insist that the content of the class was so important the boys ought to hear it too," Hockersmith recalls. Next boys were allowed to choose the elective course.

By 1974 the district determined that the evolving Family Health class met part of Oregon State's requirement for health education curriculum. The district named the course as one of two required health education classes; it became mandatory for all seniors.

In the meantime, Hockersmith obtained funding to conduct a needs assessment among secondary school students, their parents, and recent graduates of the Medford schools. This widespread survey asked what content should be covered in the course, what training the community's future parents should receive. Next, three more grant proposals brought funding for the department: one supported the refinement of the Family Health course, another spurred the writing of a personal finance unit, and a third funded research into individualized instruction.

Gini Teemer and Donna Chamberlain began the project, and for ten years they wrote and rewrote curriculum for the Family Health course. It was not uncommon in those early years for the two teachers to design, write, mimeograph, and teach a lesson within a twenty-four hour period. Today floor-to-ceiling shelves house lesson worksheets, tests, filmstrips, and readings.

Yet the task of updating materials never ends in this kind of

program. Jean James, retired home economics teacher, searches newspapers and magazines for articles that will help the current teachers give students up-to-date information. Each semester the staff reassesses the curriculum, weighing the value of each lesson carefully. If the students can get the same knowledge adequately somewhere else, the staff reasons, that part of the course must be cut in favor of information that might be either more critical to learn or harder to obtain. For example, the instructors eliminated lessons on the marriage ceremony itself to allow time for a study of crisis intervention resources. Time is precious when students have eighteen weeks in which to prepare for a lifetime.

Hockersmith is now retired after thirty-three years in public education. Looking back over those years, she singles out the Family Health program as her most satisfying involvement. "The fact that the course continues to be so vital is rewarding for me. I still hear often how important this class is to the students."

When complimented on her obvious vision, Hockersmith recalls, "People told me then I was ten years ahead of the times. I just tried to look down the road and see what might be ahead." And what does it take to pursue a vision in a school system? "Plenty of stick-to-itiveness, perseverance in the face of controversy, and the support of your administrators," she says.

Building a Nursery School

During the early years of the program, the staff "borrowed" preschoolers to act as subjects in their lessons on child development and child care. The high school students pushed their classroom desks aside to make room for the temporary nursery school. Although some would say the three and four year olds did their best to act naturally in the fishbowl setting, the artificial situation limited the high school students' learning.

In 1976, students in the high school built a nursery school that rivals professional facilities. The industrial arts classes, using materials purchased through the district's vocational education fund, constructed a large classroom and two observation rooms. The facility accommodates up to twenty preschoolers in each of its two sessions per day. The program continues to be financially self-supporting: parents pay one dollar per hour to enroll their children in the popular preschool.

Since its construction, the preschool facility has made it possible for the high school to offer a cluster of child care

courses for teenagers interested in becoming professional child care workers or more effective parents. Seniors in the required Family Health class study child development, then observe and work in the preschool for three weeks. Juniors and seniors may also choose to take a more advanced child development course and a practicum as nursery school aides. Over seven hundred high school students receive experience in the nursery school during each school year.

Support for the Nursery School

Elaine Wells is the preschool children's teacher. Until recently she was employed by the school district as an aide and nursery school supervisor. Forced to make budget cuts when voters defeated a major levy, the school district eliminated all aides, including the nursery school supervisor. However, the classified employee's contract forbade the district from acting immediately to convert the nursery school supervisor's job to an independently contracted position. Since then Wells and the preschool have been rescued by the city's Park and Recreation Department, which will assume responsibility for the financial management of the facility. Principal Fred Sutherland considers this solution an example of the intergovernmental cooperation that is needed in today's economic situation.

Sutherland, new this year to Medford Senior High School, learned quickly that the community strongly supports the nursery school. "The same day the school board agenda listed its possible closure, I had a petition on my desk from the parents of the preschoolers," he remembers. He is convinced the energy expended to save the nursery school has been worthwhile: "There's no question about the worth of the program. In fact, through all this problem-solving process, everyone has wanted the same thing--to keep an excellent program alive."

For over a month, between the day the district eliminated the aide position and the Parks and Recreation Department assumed it, Elaine Wells worked without pay. Her rewards come in other ways:

> Two of our seniors were engaged to be married after graduation. After working here, they told me they understood they weren't ready to have the responsibility of parenting. They went to college instead. Five years later I received their wedding invitation.
>
> I had to confront a student about using drugs before class. I told him if he wanted to work here he had to

choose between drugs and the children....Years later he came back to visit, bringing his own child, and telling me about his very happy marriage.

Wells clearly believes in the program. "Besides," she says, "I couldn't leave my little ones."

The Family Health Course Curriculum

The Family Health component of the child care cluster received national attention when Gini Teemer was named National Home Economics Teacher of the Year. Teemer says "teens today are concerned about more than proms, new cars, and college applications. Our class tries to deal with the reality of their concerns." The Medford Senior High School curriculum outline describes this required class:

> Family health students study interpersonal relationships and how they change throughout the family life cycle. Student explore information and attitudes regarding families, love, choosing a life partner, marriage and early adjustments, prenatal development and childbirth, family nutrition, child development and guidance, working with children, aging, and dying.

Several students in the Family Health course admit that they would not have chosen to take the class unless it had been a requirement for graduation. "I assumed the content would be just a matter of common sense," one boy explained, "but it's a lot more than that. We might come into this class thinking it's not important, but we leave thinking it's basic to our lives."

Indeed, the course content transcends what most would call common sense. Consider these examination questions:

> Which marriage do you feel is easiest and least complicated, today's marriage or marriage as our ancestors knew it? Why?
>
> What part can unfulfilled expectations play in the disillusionment many newly married experience?
>
> True or False: Teenagers have more miscarriages than adult pregnant women.
>
> List ten periods, stages, or activities that are considered crucial to emotional and social development

during the first 2-1/2 years of life.

What would be reasonable limits and how would you go about setting them for the following situations: TV viewing for all children in the family, a seventeen year old's driving the family car.

What are some of the attitudes that philosophers and theologians have proposed to allay the fear of death?

If you found yourself or your children being abused, what would you do and whom could you contact?

The breadth of the Medford Family Health course allows students to learn about human sexuality and family planning within the context of family relationships and responsible parenting. This comprehensive approach to family life education is rate. More commonly in the United States, teenagers enroll in short courses which teach anatomy and physiology, changes during puberty, consequences of sexual activity, and family planning. In these short courses, the emphasis is upon knowledge; the hope is that students will change their behavior when they receive accurate information.

In contrast, longer, more comprehensive courses such as the Medford class are designed to give students not only factual information but also clearer insight into their values and beliefs. In addition, these more comprehensive courses aim to improve students' skills in communication and decision-making, two prerequisites for effective marriages.

Seeking Student Involvement

The Medford Family Health class emphasizes communication and student involvement. Throughout the semester, the Family Health teachers actively involve students in discussions, journal writing, and roleplays. Students appreciate the opportunity to express and refine their values. There is a difference, they say, between being "lectured at" and being invited to think; the Family Health curriculum encourages them to examine their ideas.

For many, the interaction with peers brings relief: "I understand now that I'm not the only one who worries about my family and about my future. I'm not the only one who doesn't know about things like family planning." The teenagers find that some days the course strengthens their beliefs and some days it gives them a new perspective on family life.

Effective family life programs tend to be experiential in nature. Surely the unit taught in the Medford nursery school qualifies for that description. During their three weeks in the nursery school, groups of high school students alternate among established tasks: while some work directly with the preschoolers, others observe these interactions, and a third group reads contemporary books and journals on child rearing. The format itself emphasizes responsibility; teachers expect students to enter the home economics center on time, consult a chart that shows the activity they will do that day, sign in at their appropriate location, and begin work.

Students who observe the preschool complete a two-page form of questions such as "What teachable moment did you observe? How would you make the most of it? Identify children who seem to have difficulty cooperating with their peers. What would you do to help them?"

Whether it is their turn to work with the preschoolers, observe, or do related research, the seniors are active and involved. Teacher Carole Schuler says "responsibility" is a word the teenagers hear often in the Family Health course: "Our students mature right before our eyes in the course of the semester. They may start the unit on child development uninterested and uninvolved, but usually after just a day in the preschool we see them turn around."

Teemer refers to the practicum in the nursery school as a heavy jolt of reality. When students work there, they learn quickly to respect the difficulty of childrearing. There is, after all, a difference between imagining oneself as the parent of an infant and seeing oneself as the parent of a three-year-old. As Teemer puts it, "Whoever thinks to themselves, 'I want to have a teenager'?" "I feel I've succeeded when the seniors tell me they aren't ready to be parents, that they want to postpone marriage until they are ready." Indeed the nursery school practicum has caused some of Teemer's students to revise their plans. One girl says, "I'm guessing now that I'll be mature enough to be a parent in about six or seven years."

Dealing with a three-year-old's temper tantrum might indeed be a deterrent to early pregnancies, but the nursery school experience may affect some in another way. One girl who has not yet worked in the nursery school looks forward to that experience for another reason. Interested in college and a professional career, she has not planned to have children. She believes that being in the nursery school will give her a chance to become comfortable with children and, perhaps, to reconsider her plan.

Although the child development unit within the Family Health course is intended primarily to prepare high school students for parenting, the students believe these lessons also help them better understand their own parents. "Ours is what you would call a 'busy' family," one boy says, "but since I've been taking this class, we spend a lot of time at the dinner table discussing what I've learned that day." Another agrees: "Maybe we're communicating better at home because we know now what our parents go through in raising us."

Some of the students say they have improved their relationships with younger siblings. One girl who will leave home soon to attend college worries now about how she might have affected a younger sister's self-esteem: "At least I have a few months to be more positive with her before I leave."

Reflecting on Experience

During the weeks their classes are assigned to the nursery school, the Family Health teachers periodically review the experience with their students. Bob Spani, a Family Health teacher, facilitates a group discussion after his students have spent their first week in the nursery school. He calls on students individually, expecting and getting a report of their accomplishments and their concerns. More than one teenager has found the activity level of the three-year-olds disconcerting. Spani listens intently to the high schoolers' descriptions of "constant movement" and leads them to consider alternatives. "What can you do to get a young child to pay attention to a learning activity?" he asks. The answers come quickly: "Do the activity yourself first. Be excited about it. Take the initiative."

One girl shares an experience she had with a youngster who was new to the preschool. She describes how the young child clung to her after his mother left the building, and how she worked to get him involved in an art project. Spani uses this opportunity to encourage empathy among his students: "These little people are so much like us. Soon you'll be heading for your jobs and your colleges. Imagine how you'll feel when you walk into that college class or that job for the first time. Just think how that little boy in the nursery school must have felt." Congratulating the teenager for her sensitivity to the preschooler, Spani asks, "What was the hardest part of that hour for you?" Her answer is one he seems to expect: "Saying goodbye, letting go. That was hardest."

In this program, "success" is less important than learning and maturing. The high school's learning disabled students learn the same curriculum; specialized worksheets drill them for examinations on course content. All the high school students prepare "projects" for the preschoolers, learning activities designed to fit the developmental stage of a group of three or four year olds. The high schoolers are graded not on how successful the project is, but on how much they learn from doing it. They are urged to evaluate their project, to learn from their mistakes, and to improve their next performance.

Eliciting Community Cooperation

Since the program's beginning, the Medford community has been involved in the high school's Family Health and Parenting Education classes. Bob Williams, former principal of Medford Senior High School, credits the home economics teachers for bringing the program through early years of controversy. In those early years, some factions in the community opposed the Family Health course, thinking it was little more than a sex education curriculum. "Since that time," Williams says, "the course has been solid and well-accepted. The teachers continue to take the pulse of the Medford community. They make sure that in controversial issues both sides of an argument are presented. They do not advocate any one side of an issue that is controversial in the local community."

Today, just as in the early years of the program, a community advisory board assists the home economics department in reviewing its curriculum. Parents of seniors receive a description of the Family Health class and are invited to contact the teachers if they have questions about specific lessons. The list of community organizations that participate in the Family Health classes is long: Volunteers Unlimited, Foster Grandparents, Helpline, Planned Parenthood, Crisis Intervention, Alcoholics Anonymous, Childbirth Education, Campus Life, Veterans' Domiciliary.

In addition to receiving assistance from the community, the Medford program serves the local area through the preschool facility. Teacher Carole Schuler is also an active volunteer in the Medford community. She believes that the preschool brings considerable community support to the high school. "The parents of the preschoolers understand that our staff and our students really care about their children. There's nothing like seeing a football player working with a three-year-old. The benefits go both ways." Indeed, the benefits are beginning to come full

circle in one sense: two of the current preschoolers are children of program graduates.

In a broader sense, the Medford community profits from the high school program. An increasing number of young parents return to visit the high school home economics teachers. As one said to Gini Teemer, "You talk to me all the time when I'm taking care of my baby. You might not remember me. I sat in the corner and got a 'D' and you probably thought I wasn't listening. I was, and I remember."

Parenting Education at Churchill High School

Besides national recognition, the parenting education program at Churchill High School in Eugene, Oregon, has many similarities to the Medford program. In both high schools, the home economics departments offer several courses in family life and child development that provide vocational training for future child care workers as well as education for future parents. Each campus has a nursery school that functions as a laboratory in which the high school students practice newly learned skills. Both programs may be considered comprehensive; that is, they deal with a broad range of topics relevant to effective family life and child care. Both high schools work consistently with their local communities to refine curriculum and both maintain active community advisory boards.

Yet the structure of the Churchill High School program is sufficiently different from that at Medford to provide an alternative model in parenting education. In its parenting education cluster, Churchill's home economics department offers three terms of Exploring Childhood, three terms of Child Care Training, and a work-study employment option for students who are hired as nursery school assistants. In addition, the high school offers a Family Life course. None of these classes is specifically required for graduation, but students may use two terms from Exploring Childhood to fulfill two-thirds of their requirement in health education.

Churchill is a four-year high school; students of any grade may take the parenting courses. Joanne Miksis, child care coordinator and head of the home economics department, supports the inclusion of freshmen and sophomores in the classes: "We have to be realistic. Many of our younger students need this training right now. Many will not ever be seniors in high school." She has a second reason for her opinion: "Working in the preschool is one way a freshman can feel good about himself. He's needed there."

An All-Day Child Care Facility

Churchill High School's principal, Charles Stolsig, is enthusiastic about the preschool and the parenting education courses. "There are so few institutions that train parents. Most of us were trial-and-error learners of parenting, hoping we did all right with the first child, and then hoping we'd learned from that experience to be better with the next child."

Stolsig clarifies that the preschool is not experimental; it is an integral part of the high school. Indeed, the interaction between the high school students and the preschoolers is constant and varied. Students in a literature class read to the young children. Preschoolers share the high school gym and receive tutoring in French vocabulary and computer use. Students in the Exploring Childhood courses both observe and work with the preschoolers. For some teenagers, the preschool provides employment; they are hired as teaching assistants.

Designed by the high school's drafting classes, the spacious preschool on the Churchill campus functions as a child care center. The facility is open between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and accepts youngsters either on a partial or an all-day basis. A certified teacher staffs the preschool from its opening until 2:00 p.m., when a classified supervisor assumes responsibility.

Churchill High School contributes to the financial support of the preschool by allocating to it a .5 teaching position. Outside of that allocation, the facility is self-supported through tuition paid by parents of the preschoolers.

The preschool enrollment is intended to represent a cross-section of the community, including its minorities. By policy, Churchill High School staff members may not enroll their own children in the campus preschool. If staff members' families were involved, Stolsig explains, some of the information the high school students need to receive about the children might need to be restricted.

Working in the Nursery School

The long hours of the Churchill nursery school make it a realistic training ground for parenting. There are, as Miksis says, many "teachable moments" in a ten-hour day. Noontime is a particularly busy period in the nursery school. Teenagers serve lunch; that is, they persuade little ones toward green beans while they bemoan the scarcity of applesauce. They teach

three-year-olds to clear the table, then they sweep the floor behind them. Their discipline is gentle: "Maybe next time we should carry one thing at a time." And at naptime, they do what any caring parent does--they read a bedtime story, they cover and recover the youngsters, they talk more and more quietly until small eyes droop and it's time for lights out.

The high school students participate in a wide range of teaching activities within the preschool. Students in the Exploring Childhood courses work in the preschool an average of two-and-one-half hours weekly. Those enrolled in child care training work five hours each week. The high school students are expected to use primarily their own time to fulfill this commitment. In addition, many of the students volunteer to assist in the preschool either before or after their own school hours.

The Exploring Childhood Courses

The sequence of the three courses in Exploring Childhood allows a student to enter the series at any term. Miksis covers different topics each term but "recycles" some key subjects such as child development and discipline. The goals for the courses are broad:

1. To gain an awareness of human growth and development.
2. To develop an understanding of themselves and others as individuals.
3. To become aware of the responsibilities of and the need for planning for families.
4. To gain an awareness of community resources and services available to families.
5. To understand the value of quality care for young children.

Much of the curriculum comes from the United States Office of Child Development. Churchill High School was among two hundred schools in the nation selected to pilot materials developed by that office. Since then, Miksis has enlarged the content of the course, adding topics such as home safety, personal growth, and children's nutrition.

Although the academic content of the Exploring Childhood courses is important, Miksis finds the practicum in the preschool critical:

Families are so small and isolated now. Students can get

> through high school without ever having held a baby....Some of my students are so uncomfortable with young children. They need skills, certainly, but they mainly need comfort.

She is particularly pleased that 40 percent of her students are boys. She is aware that some research suggests that sexual abuse of daughters by fathers could be substantially reduced if fathers were more involved in the care of their young daughters. That same study suggests requiring high school classes that give boys experience in child care (Trotter 1985).

In her instruction, Miksis places topics related to human sexuality within the context of family life and responsible parenting. Her students learn to answer the preschoolers' questions about sexual development and to teach children ways to protect themselves from abuse. "When I teach these subjects, I give my high school students a safe place in which to ask their own questions. When they learn how to help children protect themselves, they get information for their own use."

The Child Care Training Course

Students in Child Care Training may want advanced parenting education or they may want vocational preparation. Some plan to be child care workers, others elementary school teachers. Routinely Miksis leads her students to reflect upon their experience in the nursery school. They fill out index cards describing a frustrating or difficult situation they encountered in the nursery school. Next, the class brainstorms possible solutions to the problem and roleplays appropriate alternatives. The students support one another's efforts, easily admitting when they've had a similar problem.

Students in Miksis' class understand that they are being trained for the future, but they have found clear benefits in the present. For example, they find the technique of positive reinforcement useful in any relationship. One boy tells how, when he helps a friend study, he uses positive reinforcement to encourage him: "I tell him how well he's doing and he improves."

Another student finds babysitting easier now: "I treated them differently before this class. I used to say a lot of 'don'ts' like 'don't run' and now I know how to say that in a different way. Like at the preschool--there we say 'running is for outside'." One teenager feels compassion for his parents: "Sure I can pick out their mistakes now, but I really understand

what they feel." Another adds, "We're learning how frustrated they must feel with us sometimes."

What do these students think are the hardest things parents do? "Having a kid there all the time, all day." "Teaching a right sense of values." "Answering all those why's." And what is the main thing they've learned about three- and four-year-olds? "They're a lot smarter than you think."

Predictably, the need for consistency and discipline causes the high school students most difficulty in their work with the preschoolers. Researchers in child abuse prevention suggest that learning the young child's developmental stages helps prevent abusive punishment. As the theory goes, someone who knows what to expect of a child at a certain age is more likely to be reasonable and consistent in discipline.

Miksis' students agree that their knowledge of child development has helped them, but they find it hard to be firm in a positive way. Although they have learned many nonphysical ways of solving discipline problems, some find it hard to "unlearn those handed-down ways." They know that if their own discipline as children has been primarily physical, they have to work harder to learn other techniques. Again, the preschool facility provides a place to practice the sometimes foreign ideas. In the preschool, they cannot use any form of physical force: "The preschool teacher watches to see how you're going to handle a problem. She really makes sure you do it the best way."

A Potential Expansion

The Churchill staff has another use in mind for the nursery school. Miksis wishes to broaden the learning experience for her high school students by enrolling toddlers in the nursery school. Principal Stolsig and Denise Gudger, coordinator of counseling and special education on the campus, see another need that could be solved simultaneously.

Churchill now administers a funded project for at-risk students. Combining counseling, coursework, and job experience, the program serves twenty students who otherwise would most likely drop out of school. Some of these at-risk students are parents of toddlers; an onsite child care would enable them to pursue their diploma. "It's a realistic answer to a real problem," Stolsig says. "It's only an idea now, but it's one our school is considering very seriously."

Conclusion

Medford Senior High School and Churchill High School offer two models of parenting education. Asked what advice they might give other schools wishing to begin or refine similar programs, staff members at the two schools agreed that a successful program includes:

1. Community involvement
2. Qualified staff
3. Onsite nursery school
4. Research into existing programs

First, successful parenting education involves the local community. Each of the programs reviewed in Sheek's *A Nation for Families* began from a concern within the community. Communities typically desired better education for family living, more responsible behavior among teenagers, and decreased incidence of teenage pregnancies. Actual programs resulted when an educator or a local government took the initiative to establish an advisory committee to study the situation and make recommendations.

Schools like Medford Senior High School and Churchill High School have maintained their advisory boards throughout the life of the program. Teachers in these successful programs look at the entire community, at every political and philosophical force, when they design curriculum. Medford's Teemer says, "We must be in touch with all aspects of our community. We have students from every element of this society. Respecting all of those different beliefs is critical. As teachers, we need to guard against dogmatism."

Second, any course in any subject is effective only if its instructor is effective. Beyond that, the nature of parenting education appears to demand a teacher who has multiple talents. The parenting educator teaches a wide range of subjects from the fields of health and science, psychology, sociology, and home economics. Commonly parenting educators are certified both in health and in home economics. Eugene's Miksis recommends that they have a master's degree in family life or child development.

As Miksis points out, this teacher must not only know the course content, but be able to model it. If the program includes a practicum in child care, the teacher must continually demonstrate effective interaction with the youngsters. In dealing with potentially controversial topics, he or she must be able both to understand the sensitivities of a community and to objectively present two sides of an issue. To encourage an accepting and open attitude among his or her students, the teacher must be accepting and open. Choosing the right teacher, the Medford and Eugene staffs agree, is the most important decision that will be made in programs of this kind.

Third, an onsite nursery school provides a powerful experiential component to Family Health and child development courses. In the absence of funds for construction of a new facility, other schools might begin as Churchill High School began, using an empty classroom for the nursery school. Sometimes, Miksis says, it is necessary to use a nearby facility, like a church preschool. Although any facility is better than none, she points out that when a high school controls its own preschool, it controls the learning experience of its students.

Finally, educators who wish to begin or refine parenting education courses can take advantage of the experience of successful programs. Both Medford Senior High School and Churchill High School invite visitors. In each school, staff members have designed a unique curriculum and are willing to share what they have developed. Both staffs say they offer other educators a chance to learn from their mistakes as well as their success. Our study of these two high schools tells us that they have far more success than mistakes to share.

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